



Playing for Peace: Music by Karim Wasfi (10/17/19)

00:00:25

Noah Rauch: Good evening, everyone. My name is Noah Rauch, I'm the senior vice president for education and public programs here at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. And it is my pleasure to welcome you all tonight to this very special program, along with those tuning in to our live web broadcast at 911memorial.org/live.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom and his colleagues from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations. Uh, thank you for coming. Tonight...

(applause)

00:01:02

Tonight, we're delighted to be joined by celebrated cellist and humanitarian Maestro Karim Wasfi. The former conductor of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra, Wasfi gained international attention in 2015, when a deadly attack in his Baghdad neighborhood prompted him to take his cello out into the streets for a spontaneous performance. As Hans Christian Andersen wrote, "When words fail, music speaks."

Following his performance, Wasfi went on to regularly perform these deliberate acts of resistance, playing his cello at the sites of terrorist attacks in Iraq, countering death and destruction with art and beauty.

- 00:01:39 Wasfi is the founder and president of Peace Through the, of the Peace Through Arts Foundation, a non-profit organization that serves his numerous cultural, diplomatic, and educational initiatives. He's also a fellow at the Geneva Center for Security Policy, was named the Humanitarian of the Year by the UAE global business community, and was awarded the Asia Game Changers Award by the Asia Society and the Rockefeller Foundation. He has performed throughout the United States and around the world.
- 00:02:07 Tonight, Maestro Wasfi will perform one of his site-specific compositions, dedicated to the victims of the 9/11 attacks and the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. He will perform against the backdrop of a projection from the museum's Signing Steel, an interactive installation which allows museum visitors from all over the world to leave messages and reflections that speak to their visit to this site.
- 00:02:29 After the performance, our senior director of public and professional programs, Jessica Chen, will join him for a discussion about his work and his process, his experience in cultural diplomacy, and how he uses music for healing, cross-cultural dialogue, deradicalization, and counterterrorism.
- As is abundantly clear, we are incredibly fortunate to have Maestro Wasfi here to share his music and his work with us. On behalf of the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, everyone here, and everyone watching online, thank you. We want to thank him for sharing his time, his art, and his insights with us.
- 00:03:03 And so, without further ado, please join me in welcoming Maestro Karim Wasfi to the stage.
- (applause)
- (Wasfi speaking inaudibly)

00:03:29 Maestro Karim Wasfi: ...ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here.
Allow me to commence by a moment of silence in respect for the fallen
ones. (inaudible) Thank you.

00:04:22 (clears throat)

(strumming cello)

00:04:55 (background music begins)

(bowing cello)

00:05:30 (Musical Performance)

00:18:43 (Musical performance ends)

00:18:48 (applause)

(Musical Performance)

00:23:33 (Musical Performance ends)

(applause)

00:23:41 (Musical Performance)

00:34:17 (Musical Performance ends)

(applause)

00:36:17 (applause)

Jessica Chen: Oh!

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Thank you.

Jessica Chen: (inaudible) All right.

Maestro Karim Wasfi: All right.

Jessica Chen: All right, hello, everyone. Welcome back, Maestro. Thank you so much for the performance.

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Thank you.

00:36:38 Jessica Chen: Um, so, we're just here to talk a little a bit about your process, about you, about your experience here in the museum, and then to open it up to the audience for any questions that they might have. So I thought I would begin by just thinking back to, um, actually when we met this summer. We had you come and visit the museum for the first time, and talk to us a little bit about the work you had done, um, up to date, in your very long career.

00:37:03 You're a classically trained musician and conductor, you're a cultural diplomat. You've studied music, physics, philosophy. You've not only played in concert halls and at embassies, but you've also played in schools and in terror-affected areas all across Iraq and even in sites of tragedy around the world.

So, I'm curious, kind of, if we can just bring it closer to home a little bit, have you tell us a little bit about where you were on 9/11 and maybe where that fits into this, this long life that you've already led.

00:37:32 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Well, I was hoping for you not to remind you of that... Um, it, it was a very, uh... A extremely strange experience. I was actually driving from Bloomington, Indiana, where I was pursuing my education and... Higher education in conducting and cello performance.

00:37:53 After I have left Yale, I decided to go to Bloomington, because Indiana's a distinguished, great school for music and science, and amongst other affiliations. But it was an anomaly that I was actually driving to Indianapolis Airport that morning. Coming from Iraq and witnessing-- growing up partially in Europe and then in, in Iraq-- um, and witnessing instability and the, the grotesque impact of... disagreement to the level of conflicts changing into full-range battle, right? Killing machines, in reference, to, of course, the conflict with Iran and then the Kuwait situation, and then...

00:38:42 So, I was actually driving with a friend to Indianapolis Airport. Um, and I had left a message, ironically, the night before... Um, uh... Telling my colleagues at the... At Stage, the theater that we had at Bloomington, Indiana, which is the second-biggest after the, uh... the Broadway... Telling them that I might not be appearing the next morning, um, in a very sarcastic way.

00:39:22 Um... And then things escalated that morning, with a whole perspective of... time nonexistent anymore. And, um, a very, extremely uncomfortable... um, decision that you have to make to transcend beyond the obstacles of what has actually taken place. Or do you go back in time and try to analyze them? Do you... just to, to absorb witnessing a war and surviving a war...

- 00:40:02 Trying to conceptualize in time and space, what was, what was that? What was... and then the second, and then the third plane. And then, within a couple of hours that we're heading to Indianapolis Airport. It was an extreme... um... time block, and loss of consistency with anything. Um, probably, communication was... As it is right now, communication's definitely... at a wider range of, of function, and people are realizing things on daily basis... in a very momentous way.
- 00:40:52 Possibly the same concerns that we had within different continents are repeating themselves because we don't learn from history. But then, that level of insanity that can reach, um, the ability to... kill people you do not know, necessarily. Whether they agree with the cause or they disagree, or whether there is a cause...
- 00:41:19 Um, so, it's a very mixed, mixed, a wide spectrum of, um, mixed feelings in terms of, not why anymore-- it was the how. How can, um... humans reach a level of function to... to that level of dysfunction? And to be able to pursue such actions of, uh... of intimidation?
- Jessica Chen: Yeah.
- 00:41:55 Maestro Karim Wasfi: What does the power of conviction... What, what does it... I was wondering, actually, that morning if it was genetic, if it was utterly political, economical... Um, what was this mix of insanity? So, of, more of this, than trying to rationalize...
- Jessica Chen: Sure.
- 00:42:12 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Or... Or legitimize or not legitimize. It was a, an extreme, um... Ironically, it had turned me into a bit of a pensive model, for, for an hour, trying to compare intellect, science. What is it that actually, um... What is it that would push a person simply into killing another person, not knowing what the cause is?

00:42:49 Jessica Chen: Sure, and, you know, thinking about 9/11's longer legacy, and thinking how it reaches to, to your home, in Iraq. You know, in 2015, or since 2015, you've performed at approximately 25 destroyed sites, sites that have experienced trauma and violence. And a video of you in particular, performing in Baghdad at the scenes of suicide attacks that had, had, you know, occurred a couple of hours before, I'm curious, you know, what is your thinking about your process and thinking about music and its role in these situations?

00:43:26 Um, you know, can you talk a little bit about what it means for you to bring music to these spaces and what that music provides, or what you're hoping to accomplish with it?

Maestro Karim Wasfi: It was a message of dedication, of perseverance, and refinement and civilization, respect and recognition for civility. And I couldn't question that in a country like Iraq, because as we know it, so far, it was, if not the cradle of civilization, it was one of the very first um, civilized groups... We had law, a constitution... And problems, and wars and battles.

00:44:02 And so it's a continuous, uh... Continuous issue with powers and politics. But that, that was irrelevant. I had worked extremely, uh, with extreme dedication prior to 2015 in my capacity as the chief conductor of the Iraqi National Symphony, between 2007 through 2012, um, witnessing, um, a very palpable and obvious ascending line of paradigm shifts and change, and positive change, despite disagreements-- of regional disagreements, and policy, and everything else.

00:44:48 Music as a universal language that is related, that is connected directly to brain function, to neuroscience, to frequency vibration-- to creation-- was means of instilling, uh... and assuring the society and the nation-- as much as I thought that the outreach would, will achieve-- that the, civility and perseverance is the way to proceed against intimidation and radicalization, and all the -isms that we have.

- 00:45:25 So, it was not much of a reaction, um... But it was an action, uh, a personal message that I wanted to convey and encourage everyone else I knew... Um, uh... Into taking the battle into their own hands and turning every element of life on the streets of Iraq, or the world, into, um, time and space for refinement and civility, and, uh... perseverance and dedication towards the world that we would like to live.
- 00:46:02 It was a message of encouragement. Um, I had done... Um... Within the societal engagement and the community outreach, we had managed as of 2007 through 2012, and then I decided to go back to Iraq. I was globalizing my efforts with Peace Through Arts, that I have created in Baghdad in 2008, to encourage the youth, the future leaders, and to inspire and to share science.
- 00:46:33 A sort of, a little academia that, that we had in... During, uh... Our history in, in the Roman... In the Greek, uh... Method of outreach. But it was not a replica of later... It was, it was more the concept of, we have almost a civil war. We had so much instability, and they cannot rely only on the government to resolve that. It had to be at the grassroots level, with the people, for the people.
- 00:47:03 And on the personal level, I had worked hard enough to be able to travel the world prior to that, and lots of fellow Iraqis did not actually have the opportunity in the '80s, or '70s, or '90s, due to sanctions and so forth and so on, um, as in many other nations' situations. So, it was a simultaneous, holistic approach, multifaceted, towards, um, development.
- 00:47:26 And then we have witnessed a sort of stability that was partially regional and partially very localized in Iraq in 2010. Um, through... what happened in June of 2014. So the whole, the whole concept, the whole battle, had changed. And the complications, the regional complications, the global complications- and the social media, and the different aspects of connectivity and interdependence, as well as the, the speed in which the different communities around the world were realizing how much there is of disagreement-- had, had us consider to change the rules of engagement. I, that's sounding more like militarized terminologies I'm using, but it was actually a battle.

- 00:48:24 So 2014, I decided to, instead of maintaining that level, preserving the momentum globally, to head back to Iraq, because I felt the responsibility to be there and to help and to offer and to share with everyone-- not only in Iraq, but in the Middle East and probably in the world-- uh, some positive, positive aspects of what can actually work out.
- 00:48:51 Uh, and then... That was the, the level of engagement. I thought that, um, we could range against radicalization and extremism by functioning personal, on the personal level. Uh... Within the molecule, as I usually call it. Within a person is, is, is the... Is the essence of the basic concrete foundation, for a foundation of refinement and stability, as opposed to, um, enforcing anything.
- 00:49:28 I wasn't, I wasn't, uh, enforcing any genre or any, any sort of ideologies on the streets of Baghdad. As opposed to, versus... Actually it was an effort to encourage respecting life, and not to be intimidated by gruesome acts of terror.
- Jessica Chen: What you say about music as a universal language I think really translates in this situation. Um, so, I do want to talk a little bit about your, your musical method. So you've described, you know, composing in these situations as spontaneous composition and as it being a form of resistance.
- 00:50:02 And we've talked a little, too, about how, you know, the neuroscience of music, as well, and that this spontaneous composition that you're describing, um, you know, doesn't necessarily relate to improvisation, so much as it relates to kind of the engagement of the intellect and the mind, and, kind of, the body. And so, I'm curious if you can talk us a little bit through that method, and even how it inspired or it, uh, it helped shape tonight's performance.
- 00:50:28 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Well, apart from the amount of dopamine you would get and the good energy you would get from music-- whether

you're performing it or even listening to it, in whichever genre, whether it's an expression or is it, or if it is an experience-- sound is creation, and with no sound, we would not be able to manifest different levels of connectivity to self and to others.

The perspective is connecting cognitive enhancement, cognition with neuroscience, the brain function-- how do we actually function and how do we make decisions?

00:51:00 So, it's not limited or channeled only towards performing. It's, it's a driving, it's a tool towards enabling decision-making, creativity, leadership. All based upon the fact of how conscious and subconscious function. And we know in, in, uh... many aspects of, of how we survive, the subconscious actually functions as almost 70% of our function.

00:51:33 And, then, so, it's empowering the ability to make faster decisions, with precision. And speed of making a decision is not necessarily the element, it's not necessarily the priority, but it's one of the priorities and a whole perspective of how we can function.

00:51:58 I have to confess, I have to mention that since my childhood in Baghdad, I was fascinated by artificial intelligence and robotics and the idea of, of connecting that to sound, and how we can connect the brain into functioning at different levels of... beyond probability and inevitability.

Jessica Chen: Sure.

00:52:20 Maestro Karim Wasfi: So, the idea is to connect the brain function, neuroscience, cognitive enhancement, um, to the ability of empowering self towards, beyond muscles pyramid-- to empower self-recognition and self-conceptualization, not to be intimidated, not to be, uh, uh... necessarily, uh, enslaved by, um... by the, the force of, of radicalization, or affected so negatively by circumstances.

00:52:56 And, um, I have to assure that this was not an experiment when I, when I have done this extensively, and we still do, within the capacity of Peace Through Arts in different parts of Iraq, um, and the Middle East. And even, actually, part of Europe.

Jessica Chen: Yeah.

00:53:15 Maestro Karim Wasfi: With the migrants, um, um, the impoverished orphans, um, ISIS survivors. Um, I had wished to include, uh, the... the ISIS families that are living in different... Well, this is becoming a hot topic again, pretty soon, after the rapid developments in, in, Northern Syria. And, and I think the government of Iraq is willing to, or there was... I think His, His Excellency, the minister of foreign affairs, had mentioned something today about Iraq accepting these, some of the, the... the former fighters for their trials in Iraq.

00:54:01 But I don't want to focus on this. The focus is on the other side, of function as a preventive approach and as... a proactive approach to prevent escalation, to prevent terrorizing, to prevent radicalization, but without politicizing art. So, it's, it is indeed a wide spectrum of, um... multi-facets, I think, that would include, um, science, um, cognition... the psychology, the psyche of how we function, at the same speed of how communication is rapidly developing and changing.

00:54:46 I don't believe anymore in developing countries and Third World countries and... Because there's so much shared. The younger generation is sharing, um, um, so much, and there's a high level of connectivity that is achieved. Um, and we can see it, obviously, even in different parts of the world with people protesting, or, um, uh... or seeking a certain means of expression.

00:55:17 So, how does it function? It needs, probably, another session of going into the details, but, simply said, it is empowering self and empowering the ability to transcend beyond obstacles of instability through self-realization and self-conceptualization and recognition, and then connecting to others through the therapeutic approach of music.

00:55:42 In performance and in, in... in actual, uh... Because it's a form of expression, apart from being, um, apart from being a science. Uh, one of the major, uh, seven sciences that we know throughout history is music. So, um, I, I was arguing in Iraq, and in Tunisia, also-- and we were functioning closer to some areas where ISIS fighters were recruited-- to enable people to have a different approach without channeling our function only towards the, the... what, what is happening with, with this new wave of, of a, uh, of function beyond the roots, of, of... beyond its roots in Afghanistan, other parts of the world.

00:56:32 This was actually almost exported into Iraq. There was a basic, inevitably, because of disagreement and due to other issues. Um, but it comes back to, how do we make a choice? Even genetically-- we don't know. Maybe we, all of us, we have a little ISIS in every one of us. How do we refine that? How do we reach a level not to allow this to occur and to change into something that was very, that is extremely negative and, uh, uh... circuitous and malicious and aggressive and, um...

00:57:15 Jessica Chen: Are there any specific moments you can think of? Because your foundation does so much educational work with, with young people in situations of tension, situations of transition. Are there any moments that come to mind in which you've seen music become kind of this connective tissue to build kind of bridges between, in communities?

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Absolutely.

Jessica Chen: What does that look like?

00:57:35 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Well, I have, I can give you, or give our audience a wide list of, of achievements that were not necessarily sponsored at the highest level of, with our minimum resources and dedication. Uh, millions and billions of euros and dollars were spent in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East-- not on organizations like ours, but an approach to resolve things. But, we, we managed otherwise.

00:58:01 Actually, recently, in Mosul-- uh, Nineveh. I'm not focusing only on Mosul, but Nineveh, as, as part of Iraq and part of the Middle East that had a certain, um... that has a certain history. It was, it was extremely sad to realize that Nineveh, with the interfaith and multireligious... um, um... foundation of, of ... and the history that's there...

Jessica Chen: Yeah.

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Was only becoming famous due to what had happened in June 2014.

Jessica Chen: Yeah.

00:58:40 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Um... 12 live concerts were giving in the city of Mosul, both sides across the bridge, east and west, although I hate this terminology. But, across the, both sides of the city, um... that had Christian, Jewish, Muslim music, from seven centuries' history of that place, performed in the streets of Mosul, uh, with an audience that is so much wanting to be part of stability and part of expression, and part of a homogeneous, uh, spectrum of, of existence and co-existence.

00:59:29 And, and when it comes to people... There is a level to instill and empower integration and mutual understanding beyond disagreement, I think.

Jessica Chen: Yeah.

00:59:45 Maestro Karim Wasfi: And we have seen it in other parts of the Middle East and the world, with all the divisive impact of politics. At the end, people, due to economical reasons, co-existence, history, future, or the ability to make a choice-- it's about making a choice. How to empower people to make a choice, and to recognize law and order, and, and the

necessity for, uh, an organized life as opposed to cantons and imprisonments. You know, they're due to political and/or economical, uh, function.

Jessica Chen: Sure.

01:00:22 Maestro Karim Wasfi: So it, yes. So, we had 12 concerts during Ramadan, and Ramadan is a holy, uh, month of feast in, uh, in Islam, which is similar to the three Abrahamic religions-- the other two Abrahamic religions, actually. When you look at it, it's, this, there are so many similarities. But people are not contesting things. They're either agreeing on being against or agreeing on being on the same side of, of agreements.

01:00:47 So we're approaching, we're encouraging debates. Um, healthy disagreements, um, talks, and basically... experiencing things in life that, uh, do matter. I was told that Mosul did not have... a city that is full of culture, beauty, and good food, and good history, and... which my... one... My grandfather found one of them, actually, in the last century, with the British excavation missions to that part of Iraq.

01:01:26 So beyond the monopolization and beyond the, the impact of politicizing matters, it is of a great success, I would assure, to adopt the path of, um, of, of connectivity and the path of mutual understanding and coexistence and... self-recognition. And then a mutual integration through means of soft powers and music, in particular.

01:02:05 Jessica Chen: Just to open it up to the audience, are there any questions? Our mics are going to be coming down either side. Yes. Just wait for the mic for one sec.

Audience Member: Hi-- oh, thank you. Performing in an environment where there was just an incredible amount of violence, were you ever in danger? You must have been in danger of your own life.

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Yes, I was. I got divorced because of that.

(laughter)

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Cost me my...

01:02:32 Audience Member: I don't want you to talk about your divorce, but could you talk about the danger aspect? And, I mean, how were you received? I mean, it must have been...

Maestro Karim Wasfi: How many threats? Well, countless, but...

Audience Member: And just, how were you received in the...

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Oh!

Audience Member: Yeah.

01:02:49 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Well, thank you. I assure you it was extremely positive. It is, still, if I understand what you mean by "perceived," meaning the populace, the audience, whoever was there. Or the other side of the equation, people who disagreed with, with... I was lucky, in some cases—I am still, to some extent-- and I was vigilant in other cases. And it wasn't about "I"; it was about more of "us."

01:03:12 So this... immersion, the immersive experience of including-- not endangering others, but clearly sharing, and I usually say horizontally and vertically, meaning within that... with different layers of the intellectual backgrounds and cultural backgrounds and society, social backgrounds, and any, any sort of being, we share a message of, what is it that we have to do proactively to define that?

01:03:46 So, um, we managed. I say "we" meaning in parts of, you know, Iraq where we function and still hope to do, to do so. Um... We can't turn to... I have to admit, the different organizational efforts with the government were also of extreme importance and necessity, and we did actually get the help of the police, the local police, the army, in cases when, when the government was realizing-- I mean the Iraqi government in these areas-- that we were actually functioning in favor of peace and stabilization, and without politicizing.

01:04:38 People can disagree as much as they want, and they should. It's healthy. But without endangering properties, the lives of others, and that's the whole, the whole concept of disagreement, and how we can alleviate... how we can refine and develop. So, yes, I was... I survived 16 car bombs and four assassination attempts. And a divorce. (laughs)

Jessica Chen: A question from back there.

01:05:06 Audience Member: All right, well, thank you so much for being here, as an American and Iraqi. So, for an American, I thank you for being here, and as a New Yorker, for being here on 9/11 for 9/11. It's a great... it's a great tribute to your character, so thank you so much.

And then as an Iraqi who grew up part of my life in Iraq, I congratulate you on doing all this, and I'm hoping to... And as a side comment, I took my wife and daughter for the first-- my daughter's 16 years old, goes to New York, to a private school here in the city.

01:05:43 So, first time in Baghdad, and had a great experiences in Mutanabbi Street, where, on a Friday, you have close to 10,000 people buying books on the street, which, if you collect all of Barnes and Nobles in this country, you will not find 10,000 people in any store, in all of the stores. So, it's a great cultural experience. So, I'm optimistic, just like you, about, about the story of Iraq, or coming back.

01:06:13 So my question is, how, how far have you gone to, to build a... to build back the musical infrastructure-- not only in Mosul, but also in Baghdad, or Basrah, or Najaf, or Karbala, or, or anywhere from east to west, north to south? And thank you again.

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Thank you for a practical question. And don't open Barnes and Nobles on Mutanabbi.

(laughter)

01:06:45 Maestro Karim Wasfi: As a business matter. No franchising. They're fine over there. So, in terms of performances, and I'm not going to talk about the negativity of function, because, in some cases, you get even endangered by... an, a sort of unhealthy competition. And this is possibly due to multi... different reasons within the structure... the structure of the area over there, whether it's Iraq or other parts of the Middle East.

01:07:19 But it's very evident, it's very obvious, and in cases, extremely impactful, negatively. So, however, referring to the positive impact, actually, the cities you mentioned all witnessed functions of Peace Through Arts-- our Peace Nights, I called them. People whom we have encouraged, um, and supported in Basrah, Karbala...

01:07:44 I was hoping for Al Anbar, Nineveh as a whole, and other parts of Iraq. So the symphony had functioned and performed in all parts of Iraq. I had a plan and a vision, but I think I was functioning faster than the Ministry of Culture on a, as... It was too, it was too much. It was too much of a success that, um... In those years-- 2007, '08, '09, '10, '11, '12, and then '14, '15, and '16, when I decided to, to leave the symphony due to lack of vision and lack of the ability to function.

01:08:35 And this is not against the government as seen over there, it's just... it was a call to find a good equilibrium, a... a balance that would make

things work, because culture is needed. And when oil dries out, we can flood the area with culture. And it can turn into philanthropic work, can turn into a whole system of development. So, to be practical, in Basrah, Karbala, um... Baghdad, Mosul, Ramadi... And I recall... Probably, I would have to, uh, remember six or seven other cities, but they were included in our activities.

01:09:24 Now, you have to remember that it's, it's still a transitional era in how things function, and what kind of priorities you would identify in a country like Iraq. Um, I consider Ministry of Culture as, brings the idea, you know, as one of the major entities of... A major role towards stabilization and development, as much as the army, the Ministry of Defense, the Interior, the Foreign Affairs, the Intelligence, the Industry-- the whole, the whole, the whole structure.

01:10:05 So, being part of a region that is also in a state of instability, I do believe what the people in Iraq had achieved so far is of a great respect, as well as the ability for the government to... Whether we, whether you agree or disagree with the Iraqi government, that's irrelevant at this stage, but the ability to be able to function in the most endangered times of the region.

01:10:37 So, so, we, we, you know, we did function and we still are, and we're hoping that the vision will take us through the rest of... As I said, maybe I was too fast or speedy for the tempo of things over there, because for every governorate, they had an idea of a marching cultural convoy that would reach from the South, would pass by the central, Central Iraq, and then from Central Iraq would reach the West, and then from the West would reach the North and so forth.

01:11:07 But it was... it's a huge vision. It needs lots of different dots to be... different needs to be met. But it's non-stop. Iraq, as much as New York, as much as Tokyo, as much as other countries, is a vibrant nation and a vibrant society, and a wide spectrum of ethnicities and religions and so forth and so on. Let's look at the positive impact of what can be achieved beyond the problems, again.

01:11:48 Jessica Chen: So just to bring tonight's program to a close, I would like to thank you, Maestro, for sharing your time with us. And hopefully for everyone, this evening's experience has kind of... has brought everyone together in kind of the spontaneous composition that we've discussed.

01:12:05 As someone who's worked for this museum for, for many years now, seeing our theme signing messages projected behind you was another spontaneous act of composition for those who participated in that, and really understanding that your, um, your expression, your musical expression, combined with the expression of so many people who have visited here, was really, cumulatively, a sense of resilience and resistance and peace through art and creation.

01:12:35 We do have one last question or comment from one of our distinguished guests. Thank you.

(audience member speaking off mic)

01:12:56 Maestro Karim Wasfi: Thank you.

(audience member continues speaking off mic)

01:15:32 Maestro Karim Wasfi: It's a little bit, that's the thing.

(audience member continues speaking off mic)

01:15:58 (laughter)

Maestro Karim Wasfi: No.

(laughs, applause)

01:16:10 Maestro Karim Wasfi: I would like to thank Your Excellency. I would like to thank you, definitely. I was, I was going to proceed with this, I would like to sincerely thank you and this great team of vibrant, lovely, adequate individuals. Hardworking-- Beth, Harmony, Henry, and everyone else who is here.

If... I think, as I've mentioned earlier, the families of the fallen ones, whether in New York and other parts of the world, should-- probably know already-- but should be... should feel happy and the solace of... being in a situation for the fallen ones in this building to be taken care of by people like yourself and every other great person I have met in this foundation, organization.

01:16:57 So thank you for what you do. Thank... I would like to also thank the, the ladies and gentlemen who shared this experience. And very quickly and promptly, the idea of the instant composition are actually based upon connecting to every one of us and connecting to self with no preconceived notions.

01:17:27 It's the excitement and the stimuli that we can sense, and the unexpected. And then instantly... I'm classically trained, and it was very, extremely odd to shift back and forth between the repertoire that I know. But it is empowered by the energy of transcendence and the energy of every individual in time and space, in a resonant impact that will resonate within everyone's imagination and history and the concept towards the future.

01:18:04 So that's the concept of this and compositions that connects... that connectivity that we need to enable, to enable us to transcend beyond obstacles and every negative aspect of that. So, thank you again.

Jessica Chen: That's our way of saying thank you.

(applause)

Maestro Karim Wasfi: Thank you.

Jessica Chen: Thank you all so much.